DESIGN PRACTICAL TURF AREAS

Since turfgrasses are the most often over-irrigated plants in Utah landscapes, it is important to consider the practicality, function and placement of turf areas when designing or redesigning your landscape. You can save a considerable amount of time, money and water by designing practical turf areas that use turfgrasses for a specific function. For example, turfgrasses can be used to keep a slope from eroding, as a playing surface in recreational areas for children and pets, or as a small 'oasis' near the entrance of your home.

WHAT IS TURF?

Turf is the area of the landscape that is planted in turfgrasses. Turfgrasses and their needs vary in the type of climate, soil, water, nutrients, shade tolerance and amount of traffic they can withstand. Kentucky Bluegrass, the most commonly used turf in Utah, has a high water requirement and should be planted in practical use areas only. In outlying areas, consider using more drought-resistant grasses such as a Fescue mix. Different examples of turf are planted and labeled in the turf plots here at Sego Lily Gardens.

BENEFITS OF TURFGRASSES

Turfgrasses are the most functional and versatile plants in the landscape. Practical turf areas are an asset to any landscape because they absorb water, reduce storm water runoff, filter rainwater contaminants and prevent erosion. They also provide a cooling effect, oxygen and areas for recreation.

PLACEMENT OF TURFGRASSES

In a water-wise landscape, turfgrasses don't need to be excluded, but rather used only in areas of functional use. If the turf area of your landscape only receives traffic when it is mowed, consider alternative plantings. If you have areas in your landscape that have been difficult to maintain, such as slopes and small areas, other plant choices might be more appropriate. Another way to reduce the need for turf is to include hardscape features, such as patios and walkways.

AERATE: Aerating your turf removes small cores of soil and grass to a depth of 3-4 inches. This reduces compaction and improves oxygen and water penetration to the roots.

FERTILIZE: Build up your turf's drought tolerance by properly selecting and applying fertilizer. Over-fertilizing decreases root development and under-fertilizing causes turf to be thin, pale green or yellow and weedy.

Mow Properly: Do not cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade in a single mowing. Cutting more than that will put the lawn under stress, cause disease and thin the lawn over time. Maintain a regular mowing schedule throughout the growing season. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn will help to retain moisture and add organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

Irrigate Properly: The general rule is to water deeply and infrequently in order to promote deeper grass roots. The frequency and amount of water you apply are dependent on many factors including the type of soil and turf, the weather and slope. Below is a suggested watering schedule for this area:

***Basic Turf Irrigation Schedule for Sandy City, Utah**

Startup until April 30	Once every 6 days
May	Once every 4 days
June	Once every 3 days
July	Once every 2 days
August	Once every 2 days
September	Once every 4 days

**This schedule is for an average rainfall year. Adjust, if needed.*

Keep in mind that cycling your irrigation may be beneficial. Follow these steps to cycle your irrigation:

1. Irrigate long enough to wet the root zone without runoff.
2. Stop watering until water is absorbed.
3. Repeat the cycle when water penetrates to the desired depth.
4. Allow the top few inches of soil to dry out before your next watering day.

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